

THE  
D O V E,  
WITH AN  
Olive-Braunch  
In its Mouth;  
OR,  
GODS *Mercy to Sinful MAN.*

Delivered in a *SERMON* at Great St. Helens  
London, March 15. 1662.

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B. Y  
AB. CHEESEMAN, A Minister Blind from  
his Child-hood.

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LONDON,  
Printed for the Author, in the  
Year 1663.

THE

DOVE

Olive-Branuchi

In this Month



DivisioN 282

Mr. CHURCHMAN, A. 1850

1850

London

Printed for this Author, in the

Year 1850

[f. 1.]

Ephes. 2. Verse 4th.

*But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.*

**T**HE Apostle in the fore-going Verses, lyes down a five-fold Character that is agreeable to the condition of all men, while they continue in a Natural condition, First, They are *dead in trespasses and sins*; As a man that is dead in respect of his body can contribute nothing for the restitution of the life of his body: So those that are dead in respect of their Sins, they can contribute nothing for the restoration of their Souls; there is no Reasonable man will look for Health and Strength in the Grave. Secondly, *They walk according to the course of the world*; that is, they love to travel in the broad way where there is most company; here they conform themselves to the multitude. It is a certain sign of a Corrupt heart, when men think that any action may pass for Current coin, if they follow therewith a General Custom. Thirdly, *They obey Satan*. All men whiles they continue in a state of Nature, they walk according to the Prince of the Air. Fourthly, *They fulfill the desires of the flesh*, and they live after the Flesh, not after the Spirit, they live as they list, they follow their own corrupt Imaginations. Fifthly, *They are the Children of Wrath*, they deserve to be tormented in Hell for ever, and they are every moment lyable to fall under the wrath of God; and this is the Condition of all Men and Women by Nature: But, saith the Apostle, *God who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us*: Then he proceeds to shew the Dignity and Privilege to which those that belong to the election of grace in due time do attain through Christ. The Mercy of God is the main thing to which I will speak at this time, and the Doctrine is this,

*That God is exceeding Merciful, or, There are riches of Mer-  
cy in God.*

And this does signify Readiness in God to succour the creature in distress; God the Compeller without any Passion; and here I shall give you divers particulars that God is exceeding Merciful; I shall begin with the first, That God is Merciful. And this will appear if we consider that his Mercy is of a spreading nature; the whole world is a large Volume written within and without with Characters of Mercy; the mercy of God is over all his works, he openeth the hand of Liberality and supplieth the want of every Creature; 'tis Mercy that calls down seasonable showers of Rain to refresh the Thirsty ground; 'tis Mercy that sends the Sun, with a load of Blessings, from one end of the world to the other; 'tis Mercy that cloathes the Fields with Grass, the Vallyes with Corn, and the Spring with Flowers.

2. It appears that God is Merciful, because he looks upon Mercy as his Glory; when Moses desired to have a sight of Gods Glory, God passed by him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquities and transgressions and sin; God looks upon Mercy as the choicest thing that belongs to his Crown; Men oftentimes would be glad if they could find an opportunity to revenge and inflict their malice on them they have a Controversie with: but God he deals with sinners in a contrary way, he looks upon it as his Glory to pass over transgressions iniquities and sins.

3. It will appear that God is exceeding Merciful, if we consider that he delights in shewing Mercy, he doth not willingly afflict the Children of men, Judgement is his Strange work, Acts of Severity they are in a manner forced from God, he doth not punish till he is provoked by our sins, but Acts of Mercy are performed by him with Delight, because they are most suitable to his disposition; as the Bee that gives Honey naturally, but it does not sting but when it is forced; he had rather Quicken and make alive, than Kill and destroy; God had rather hold up, than overturn and make desolate; Justice never takes place unless it be to revenge the quarrel of abused Mercy, like to the Prince.

Prince described by the Poet; thus God is swift to Reward, but slow to Punish. It is remarkable, God was longer in destroying One City, than in building the Whole world, he created the World in six days, but he was seven days in accomplishing the destruction of *Jerico*; God had rather glorifie his Mercy in Saving of Sinners, than in the Punishing of them. *Ezekiel* 3. 11. *Say unto them, At I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will you die? O House of Israel?* Here you see that God doth not delight in the destruction of Sinners, the Confirmation of it is with an Oath, and there is an Use of Exhortation, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die? O House of Israel?* God he professeth that he *hath no pleasure in the death of a Sinner*. And if it be Objected as it is in the 1. of *Proverbs*, and the 26. Verse, *I will laugh at their Calamity, I will mock when their fear cometh, I answer*, the Death of a Sinner may be considered two ways, as it is an Act of Justice to punish a wilfull breach of the Law, and then he doth delight in the Death of a Sinner, but otherwise he doth not delight in the Sinners destruction.

4. It appeareth that God is merciful, because he oftentimes suffereth other Attributes to be at a loss when he shews mercy, namely his Justice and Faithfulness. First in his Justice, it doth often darken that in pardoning wilful sinners; Wicked men are apt to think that God doth not take notice of their evil ways, therefore they confidently walk on in vain courses, and because God is slow in Punishing, therefore they are bold in Sinning.

Secondly, God oftentimes seems to forget his faithfulness, by shewing mercy, 3. *Jonas* 4. there *Jonas* is sent with this Message, *Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed, but take notice, they believed the words of the Prophet, and accordingly proclaimed a solemn Fast, and they humbled themselves greatly before the Lord*; but what follows? God gave a Commission to the Angel to put up his Sword, and so they were delivered from ensuing dangers. God had sent a threatening message to King *Ahab* by his Prophet, but because he *humbled himself, God repented of the evil he thought to bring upon him*. So in the 18. of *Jerem*, the 7 and 8 Verses, *At what instant I shall speak concerning*

ing a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And because this place of Scripture is so excellent to the purpose, I shall crave a little time to insist on it.

First, There are special times wherein God will punish sinners, for these Iniquities that are committed amongst them.

Secondly, The time will come wherein God is resolved to punish a people, but yet he will not strike, till first he speaks and gives a timely warning, *at what instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, to pluck up, and destroy.*

And, Thirdly it is observable, That when a people turns from their evil ways, and repent of their evil doings, whereby they have provoked God to anger, he will repent him of the evil he thought to do to them.

But it may be objected, Doth God alter his Decrees? there is no such matter; You may see in the 6. of *Zacharias*, and the 1. Verse, there the Prophet sees four Chariots coming forth from between the two Mountains of Brass; the four Chariots signify Angels sent forth into the world, to shew unto men several dispensations of God; and the two Mountains of Brass, do signify the firmness and stability of Gods Decrees; the Decrees of God are unchangeable; Men often repent of their actions, because of some inconveniency that is in them, but now God, by virtue of his Omnipotency, having a full sight of all things that shall come to pass, he cannot repent, so as to condemn his own righteous counsels, and therefore you have it in the 23. of *Numbers*, and the 19. Verse, *God is not a man, that he should lye, nor the Son of man, that he should repent.* *What he said, and shall he not do it?* or *he spake, and shall he not make it good?* God is infinitely wise in all his determinations, and it were blasphemy to think that God will disapprove that which he hath decreed originally. God is said to repent in Scripture in his Attributes, and seeming to imitate mens actions he is said to repent, but the Acts of God they are eminent Acts of God, they stand like the Laws of the *Modes* and *Perfians*, that alter not: God sometimes wills indeed a Change, but never changes

ges his Will, and to this purpose saith St. Bernard, God doth sometimes change a Sentence he hath pronounced, but never changes the Counsel he hath decreed. And thus much for the fourth particular, God doth often shew mercy to the seeming loss of his Justice and Faithfulness.

5. It appears that God is merciful, because he invites sinners to accept of Life and Happiness, as it is in the 11. of St. Math. and the 18 Verse, *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*; and in the 55. of Esay, and 1. Verse, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy Wine and Milk without money, and without price*. And oh that sinners would but take notice of the bowels of Christ, that are yearning towards them! how often, through the foolish obstinacy of a perverse heart, have you refused the offers of Grace, Life, and Salvation! and yet behold a door of mercy is set open, and you are solemnly invited to enter in; if God were not merciful, he would not knock at the doors of sinners hearts so as he doth.

6. He doth not only give Invitations to sinners, but he doth exercise a great deal of patience and forbearance towards them, he patiently waits upon them during the time of their Impenitency, and yet bears the wrong that is done to him. If a man had the meekness of all the Angels in Heaven, and all the Saints on Earth, and did sit in Gods place but for one hour, he would soon turn the world to ruine and desolation, as St. Cyprian speaks. The patience of God is greatly to be wondered at, if we consider that God is acquainted with all the sins of all men in the world, his patience doth not proceed out of Ignorance, he knoweth the hearts of all his Creatures, and takes notice of their wicked actions, there is nothing hid from him, he knows the secrets of all hearts; and further, he doth not only know the wickedness that is in the world, but he hates it, and he hath power enough to revenge it, 'tis not for want of power, that he doth exercise so much patience. And thus much for the demonstration of the Point, I shall only make some Utes, and so conclude.

Use 1. Is to the people of God, Oh be perswaded, and prevailed with, by the riches of mercy that are in God. There are divers Seasons of Mercy.

1. There is Preventing mercy. God finds his people in a state of Nature with other men, he finds them Children of Wrath, and he makes them Vessels of Honour, He comes to them when they are not able to Pitty themselves. That is Preventing mercy; and then there is

2. Pardoning mercy. God is willing to pass by the Iniquities of his People; though they have been full of reproachings and backslidings against him, yet he is willing to take and receive them again; God doth so forgive, as that they shall be fully delivered from Condemnation. All the Afflictions that do befall the Children of God in this life, are not in regard of the satisfaction of Gods Justice, but to Purify them, as he is pure.

Thirdly, There is Directing mercy in God. He will not let his People to take a step in the dark; he will be to them a Piller of fire, leading them in the wilderness of this World.

4. There is Providing mercy in God. He will certainly provide for his own Children, he will give them such a portion of Outward things, as he knows to be most needful for them; he will give them what they want, though not always what they wish; rather than Gods Children shall want, he will cause Water to come out of the stony Rocks, and the Clouds to rain down Bread in the Wilderness, and will not fail to give them a seasonable Supply in all times of their need.

5. There is Protecting mercy in God. He leads them to their Chambers of Preservation, in the midst of Ruine and Desolation.

6. There is Crowning mercy in God. Oh often meditate upon that. He will put a Crown of never-fading Blessedness

Blessedness on his Childrens heads, they shall have an exceeding, surpassing, eternal weight of Glory; they shall have a Sea of Honey, for every Crum of Gaul; How happy will it be for them, when they shall be laid up in the sure imbracing arms of Jesus Christ, when they shall never have sin in their souls, nor sin in their presence.

3. Observe the Malignant nature of Sin, that can cause Wrath in the bosome of a Merciful God. Were it not for Sin, God would be continually smiling upon his Creatures. Certainly never an Arrow that is shot against us in a way of Suffering, but we have shot it up in a way of Sinning. Labour therefore to receive those Mercies from God, which may draw your hearts nearer to God. God is most liberal in bestowing great mercies, that with earnestness of soul we shall beg of him; As for mercies of the left hand, they are mercies that the best of Gods Children may want, and the worst of sinners may have; therefore take heed of murmuring; God is merciful, therefore we are not to murmur at his Decrees; God is not to give an account of any of his Actions to his Creatures. I remember that of *Austin*, As none can lawfully comprehend, so none can justly reprehend the Justice of God.

2. Do not murmur at the Laws of God. Men are subject to think that Gods Laws are too strict and precise, or too narrow, they would have it a broader way: but remember, that the Laws that we are bound to make our rule to walk by, are the Laws of a merciful God, and there is none of them but it is for the Glory of the Creator, and God of the Creature to keep.

3. Do not murmur at the Providence of God. Faith and Patience, Humility and Heavenly mindedness, these are most sweet in time of Affliction; and though God be exceeding merciful, yet we must take heed that we abuse not this Mercy, as *Tertullian* speaks, Mercy improved will open the surest, so Mercy abused will pull down the surest Judgement; the Mercy of God, if we lay hold of

it by Faith and Repentance, it will appear our sweetest Friend, but if we neglect it, it will become our greatest Enemy; if Mercy be thy Accuser at the Last Day, who wilt thou have an Advocate for thee? That Fury that doth arise from Abused Mercy, it is dreadful and intollerable, that Mercy thou neglectest now in the time of thy health, if thou shalt continue therein; none shall be more dreadfully tormented in Hell than they that have trifled away the choicest opportunity of Mercy. Oh, seeing God doth lead thee with Cords of Love, let Mercy prevail with thee to return unto the Lord, for if the White Flag be drawn in, the Bloody Flag will be set up, and if the Spirit of Grace be neglected, it will turn to a Rod of Iron at last, and break thee in pieces like a Potters Vessel. And so much shall serve for this time.

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**FINIS**